The Pastimes of Nimai Pandit

Act Two - Nimai Pandit as a Youth

Nimai Pandit Defeats Keshava Kasmiri - The Most Secret of all Secrets
from "Sri Gaura Lila"
The Pastimes and Precepts of the Golden Avatar
by His Holiness Varsana Swami
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Narrator: Nimai Pandit sat in the midst of His students and followers in the posture of a seated warrior. His left leg was crossed beneath Him, with His right foot touching the ground. He leaned back onto His left hand, which was resting by His hip. The image of perfect ease and poised energy, He seemed ready to receive any challenger and turn him away in thorough defeat. Passersby unthinkingly gasped for breath upon catching sight of the beautiful youth surrounded by a crowd of attentive students. Nimai Pandit's face was constantly welcoming to all, being decorated with His gracious smile and beautiful eyes.

In a clear, melodious voice, sixteen year old Nimai Pandit expounded on the profound Vedic scriptures, moving with astonishing ability from one interpretation, to refuting it, to establishing another interpretation without touching upon the first.

At the same time that Nimai was becoming established in Sri Navadvip Dhama as the most outstanding Pandit ever to debate there, a great scholar named Keshava Kasmiri was travelling all over India defeating everyone who challenged him. The possible meeting of these two famed pandits created a great deal of excitement in Navadvip.

Keshava Kasmiri's fame as a great scholar and debater was undisputed. Everyone who tried to debate with him suffered defeat. He had even assumed the proud title of Digvijayi, which meant "The Conqueror of All Directions." This not only proclaimed his undisputed victory over every pandit he had ever met, but served as an open challenge as well.

Along with the pompous title went the custom of receiving signed declarations of defeat from each would-be opponent. The Digvijayi did not even have to voice his call-to-arms, "Submit yourself or meet with me in open debate!" for pandits all over the nation knew his prowess. Even so, the Digvijayi knew no satisfaction because he aspired to have the world's greatest

scholars bow before him.

He decided to go to Navadvipa, India's center of learning, in order to find a worthy opponent who would increase the magnitude of his reputation.

Student: O Your Grace. a certain pandit who calls himself a Conqueror of All Directions is coming this way! He is said to have won the favor of Goddess Saraswati and has been vanquishing pandits all over the land.

2nd Student: He has hundreds of signed declarations of defeat from the greatest intellectual champions in the world! Now, he says that he wants to debate anyone who dares meet his challenge. And, if no one will meet him, he demands that we give him written confessions of our defeat! What shall we do?

Nimai: (nonchalantly looking into the distance, laughing softly) What is the problem? Have you not seen that whatever intoxicates a person to indulge in vanity, the Lord always takes away? Humility is the constant companion of a person endowed with all god qualities. Have you not heard of the fate of all the mighty conquerors of old? Has there ever been any person whose egotism was not brought down? The Supreme Lord never tolerates conceit. For this reason, I assure you that this "Conqueror of All Directions" will be completely humbled at this very place.
(The students are delighted.)

Student: If a mere youngster of Navadvipa defeats the conqueror of all the other intellectual empires of the world, then not only would our prestige be preserved, but it will increase!
(The two pandits and their followers proceed towards each other, stopping in the middle but keeping their distance.)

Keshava Kasmiri: (to his student) Is this perhaps Nimai Pandit? He is so young Y so beautiful Y so graceful and confident!

Keshava Kasmiri: (to Nimai Pandit's student) Sir, I am Keshava Kasmiri, the Digvijayi. What is the name of your Teacher?

Student: He is, indeed, the great Nimai Pandit Himself!

Nimai: Great Pandit, you are welcome here. Please sit

comfortably with us and we will have a friendly debate for some time. I have heard everything of your views and reputation but I can never agree with it.
(They all sit down.)

Keshava Kasmiri: I understand that You are a teacher of Vyakarana, Sanskrit grammar, and that Your name is Nimai Pandit. People speak very highly of of Your teaching of beginner's grammar.

Nimai: Yes, I am known as a teacher of grammar, but factually, I cannot impress my students with grammatical knowledge, nor do they understand Me very well.

Keshava Kasmiri: (puffed up) Really? Well, what subject do You wish to debate upon?

Nimai: My dear Sir, whereas you are a learned scholar in all sorts of scriptures and very experienced in composing poetry, I am only a boy, a mere student and nothing more!
Further, My students and I would surely all be delivered from all sinful reactions if you would favor us with a poetic account of the glories of Mother Ganges!

Narrator: Hearing these words, Keshava Kasmiri stood up, looked about on all sides and, smiling proudly, began to praise the Ganges in one hundred verses which he composed on the spot. These Sanskrit verses were so lilting and contained such varied figures, that his recitation appeared to possess the amplitude and dignity of a voice from the clouds. Sarasvai herself was present on his tongue and therefore whatever he said was perfect in every wa. No human being possessed the power to compose such verses or even comprehend the full depth of meaning of his spontaneous composition.
(Students from both sides cheer, clap and shout in great appreciation.)

Students: Rama! Rama! Sadhu! Keshava Kasmiri ki jaya!

1st Student: It is most wonderful!
2nd Student: How can such words come from any mortal!?

Narrator: The Digvijayi's description was virtuously laden with all conceivable rhetoric embellishments. Even scholars deeply

versed in all branches of the shastra found it extremely difficult to keep up with the complex meaning of the quickly recited poetry.

All agreed that the verses would have to be heard a number of times and carefully studied to be fully appreciated. In this way, Keshava Kasmiri spoke on late into the night.

When the last verse was spoken, Sri Gaura Sundar laughed sarcastically, saying:

Nimai: Your poetry phrasing is so difficult that no one can understand it but you and your Goddess Sarasvati, but if you explain the meaning of even one verse, we can all hear it from your own mouth and thus be enlightened.

Keshava Kasmiri: Certainly, I would be happy to break down the poetic elements for You and explain my method of utilizing them. Which verse should I explain? Did you have a favorite?

Nimai: Yes, the sixty -fourth verse. You said, "The Glory of Mother Ganges is eternal and absolute. She is the most fortunate because she emanated from the lotus feet of Sri Visnu, the Personality of Godhead. She is the second Goddess of Fortune, and therefore she is always worshipped both by demigods and by humanity. Endowed with all wonderful qualities, she flourishes on the head of Lord Siva."

Keshava Kasmiri: (astounded) [gasp] I recited all the verses like the blowing wind! How could You possibly learn by heart even one among those verses?

Nimai: By the grace of the Supreme Lord, someone may become a great poet, and similarly by His grace, someone may become a great sruti-dhara, one who can memorize anything immediately.

Keshava Kasmiri: I am satisfied by this statement, and I will answer You and explain the verse.

Nimai: Kindly explain the special qualities and faults in the verse.

Keshava Kasmiri: There is not a tinge of fault in that verse!! Rather, it has all the good qualities of poetic figures, of simile and alliteration.

Nimai: My dear sir, I may say something to you, if you will not become angry. Would you like me to explain the faults in this verse? There is no doubt that your poetry is full of ingenuity, and certainly it has satisfied the Supreme Lord. Yet, if we scutinizingly consider it, we can find both good qualities and faults. Now, therefore, let us carefully analyze this verse.

Keshava Kasmiri: (arrogantly) You are correct when You say that this verse is very well composed. But, You are an ordinary teacher of grammar; what do You know about literary embellishments? You cannot review this poetry because You are not qualified.

Nimai: (humbly) Because I am not on your level, I first asked you to teach Me by explaining the faults and qualities in your own composition. I have not studied the art of literary embellishments, but I have heard about it from higher circles, and thus I can review this verse and find in it many faults as wellas some good qualities.

Keshava Kasmiri: (peeved) All right, Panditji, let me see what qualities and faults You have found.

Nimai: Let me speak, and please hear Me without becoming angry. My dear Sir, in this verse, there are five faults and five literary ornaments. I shall state them one after another. Kindly hear Me, and then give your judgement. Actually, if we examine it in fine detail, We will find unlimited faults. But, that's all right Y

Nimai: After hearing Nimai Pandit's scholarly presentation, Keshava Kasmiri was struck with wonder. His arrogance was gone and even though he tried to speak, no sound came out of his mouth.
(to himself) This mere boy has blocked my intelligence! I can therefore understand that Sarasvati, the Goddess of Learning, has become angry with me. This wonderful explanation could not have been possible for any mortal; therefore, Mother Sarasvati must have personally spoken through His mouth!

Nimai: Do not worry. Continue on with your composing and recitation.
(Keshava Kasmiri is flustered by his inability to compose more verses. The student stifle their laughter but Nimai Pandit

forbids any misbehavior. He speaks kindly to Keshava Kasmiri.)

You have made an exhausting effort by composing these wonderful verses and you are naturally very fatigued. It is getting late. Our debate should be postponed until tomorrow. Take rest now and don't feel discouraged!

Nimai: Nimai Pandit was always tender with His opponents - strong in principle but soft in character. The Lord behaved in the same way to all the professors in Navadvip. Although He defeated them all, He never broke the spirit of those He vanquished. Thus, everyone was pleased with Him. It was for this reason that every one of those pandits who lived in Navadvip was, in his heart of hearts, well-disposed toward Nimai Pandit.
(The Lord and His disciples leave.)

Keshava Kasmiri: (to himself) Sarasvati herself gave me this blessing of great oratory prowess. I have met in debate all those who are well-versed in the most advanced intellectual systems in the world -nyaya, sankya, atajava, nirmamsa, vaisesika, and vedanta philosophies. I have found no one in the whole world who could even advance a plausible refutation to my views. There was no question of their having the ability to defeat me.

But, such is the contrivance of Provivdence that this brahmana Boy, who is barely a teacher of the Vyakarana, a subject for infants, should be able to defeat me! The boon of Sarasvati seems to be uncertain. There is good cause for the greatest anxiety in this. I must have committed some offense against the Goddess and, because of this, the power of my genius gas been diminished. I must find out the cause of it this very night!
(His diciples leave. Keshava Kasmiri rests and meditates, then sleeps. Mother Sarasvati comes to him in a dream.)

Sarasvati: Listen, good brahmana, for I am going to reveal to you the hidden secret of all Vedas. If you disclose this to anyone, your life will surely be cut short. You should know that He at Whose hands you suffered defeat is most assuredly the Lord of all the endless universes!

He is, indeed, the self-same Lord Whose Lotus Feet I forever serve. I feel ashamed even to appear before Him, because my function is to delude all creatures into the vanities of the false ego, and therefore, I have no admission into the sphere that is illumined by the glance of Vasudeva. It is I who speaks

through your mouth, but I have no power in His presence. Even the thousand-faced Ananta-Sesa is bewildered in the presence of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Whom you have seen Face to Face as a brahmana Boy.

O Brahmana, go quickly to His Lotus Feet and surrender your body, mind and words to Him.

(Keshava Kasmiri wakes up and goes to Nimai Pandit. He offers obeisances and Nimai Pandit helps him up.)

Nimai: Brother, what is the meaning of this behavior?

Keshava Kasmiri: Such is the merciful glance of Thine eyes!

Nimai: Being the undisputed "Conqueror in All Directions," why do you behave in such a humble way to Me?

Keshava Kasmiri: Please listen, O Prince of Brahmanas! You are Narayana in the form of one of the twice-born in the Kali yuga. Who has the power to recognize You? This suspicion grew in my mind as my power of speech deserted me and now it is confirmed. You are declared the "Breaker of all Worldly Vanity" by the scriptures. I have truly experienced this undoubted truth.

You overcame me three times and yet preserved my reputation. Could such a thing be possible except by the power of the Supreme Lord Himself?

Most auspicious indeed was the planetary conjunction under which I set foot in Navadvip. I, so deeply sunk in the world of Maya, have obtained sight of You. I, who have remained entangled in ignorant, selfish desires and have long wandered astray, utterly deceiving myself, by good fortune, have now obtained the sight of You, the Refuge of All. Be pleased, O Great One, so as to instruct me in such a way that there may never again arise any sinful desires in my mind!

Nimai: (smiling) Listen, O illustrious brahmana, on whose tongue Saravati herself abides, you are indeed most fortunate. The use of learning does not lie in conquering all directions. The only genuine scholarship is that which serves the Supreme Lord.

Consider this well and with attention - when a person dies, his wealth, learning and other assets never accompany him to his next birth. Know for certain that the only true fruit of learning is when one's mind and work abide at the Lotus Feet of Sri Krsna. I declare unto you the highest truth: Devotion to Visnu is the one and only thing that is of value in all these

countless worlds.
(Keshava Kasmiri offers obeisances and leaves. Nimai Pandit sits center stage with His disciples.)

Narrator: News of the Lord's victory over Keshava Kasmiri quickly spread to all parts of Nadia. Everyone was overwhelmed with astonishment, and finally admitted that Nimai Pandit was undoubtedly a very great scholar. They confessed that Nimai Pandit had every justification for His pride, and that it was only now that the real greatness of His learning was made known to all.

1st Villager: If He had only read nyaya, He could have easily attained the position of Bhattacarya!

2nd Villager: We should join together and confer upon Nimai Pandit the title of Pradasimha, "the Lion of Controversy!"

Narrator: The citizens of Navadvip deserve our homage simply because they were so privileged as to witness the pastimes of Lord Caitanya as Nimai Pandit, the young intellectual warrior. Because of their love for Nimai Pandit, the people of Navadvip received the Lord's mercy in being allowed to participate in His Lila. It was not His purpose to reveal Himself to everyone at that time, but, when He chooses to extend His mercy, He arranges for His devotee to be situated so that the hard coverings of pride and false ego break apart and leave the devotee free to accept the Lord.

Keshava Kasmiri gave up all his opulence, both of learning and wealth and became a mendicant. Through him, Sri Caitanya showed that surrender to the Absolute Truth alone gives meaning and value to all knowledge.

This is also the path of real freedom and victory as Srimati Radharani Herself states and Sri Caitanya repeats in Her words:

"Even a drop of the ocean of the nectar of devotion is so perfectly satisfying to the soul that one who tastes it forgets all other tastes due to complete absorption in thoughts of Sri Krsna. With heart and soul surrendered to Krsna, such a person wanders as a carefree mendicant, lost in the joy of chanting the glories of his wonderful Lord, Sri Krsna."
(Bhajan)